

REMARKS

In the Office Action, dated February 10, 2006, the Examiner objected to claims 5 and 22 as allegedly containing informalities; rejected claims 1-10, 16-27 and 33-36 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by WO 00/79436 (hereinafter "STIBEL") and rejected claims 11-15 and 28-32 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over STIBEL in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,098,081 (hereinafter "HEIDORN").

By way of this amendment, Applicants have amended claim 1 to substantially incorporate the subject matter of claim 8 and to improve form. Dependent claim 9 has been amended to depend from claim 1. Claim 18 has been amended to substantially incorporate the subject matter of claim 27 and to improve form. Claims 23, 24, 28 and 31 have been amended to improve form. Claims 8, 10-13, 21, 25-27, 35 and 36 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 37-39 have been added. No new matter has been added by the present amendment. Claims 1-7, 9, 14-20, 22-24, 28-34 and 37-39 are currently pending. Reconsideration of the outstanding rejection of pending claims 1-7, 9, 14-20, 22-24 and 28-34 is respectfully requested in view of the amendments above and the following remarks.

CLAIM OBJECTIONS

On page 2, the Office Action objects to claims 5 and 22 as allegedly including informalities. Specifically, the Office Action objects to the language "the at least one search characteristic" contained in claims 5 and 22 as not having a basis in claims 1 and 18, from which claims 5 and 22 depend respectively. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 18 to recite a "search characteristic" such that the language in claims 5 and 22 now has a basis in claims 1 and

18. In view of these amendments, Applicants respectfully request that the objections to claims 5 and 22 be withdrawn.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102

On page 3, the Office Action rejects claims 1-10, 16-27 and 33-36 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by WO 00/79436 A2 (hereinafter "STIBEL"). Applicants respectfully traverse.

Amended independent claim 1, for example, recites a system that includes "an input module accepting a query defining a search executable on potentially retrievable information and parsing the query," "a query broadening module providing a broadened query, wherein an operator is provided with at least one broadening search characteristic of the query to request query broadening" and "a presentation module presenting at least one of the broadened query or results of a search executed on the broadened query."

A proper rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102 requires that a reference teach every aspect of the claimed invention. See M.P.E.P. § 2131. STIBEL does not disclose or suggest the combination of features recited in Applicants' amended claim 1. For example, STIBEL does not disclose or suggest "a query broadening module providing a broadened query, wherein an operator is provided with at least one broadening search characteristic of the query to request query broadening," as recited in amended claim 1. In rejecting claim 8, which has been substantially incorporated into claim 1, the Office Action (pg. 5) relies on page 9, lines 21-24 of STIBEL for allegedly disclosing this claimed feature.

At pg. 9, lines 21-24, STIBEL discloses:

The query engine 14 may access information from the knowledge base 16 and the profile database 18 for the purpose of attempting to match the user query to information stored within the relational knowledge base 16 and the profile database 18. If the key phrases within the user query can be recognized by matching these key phrases to the information within the knowledge base 16, the query engine can receive from the knowledge base 16 a list of meanings that are associated with the matched key words.

This section of STIBEL, thus, merely discloses the matching of key phrases with a user query to corresponding key phrases stored in databases 16 and 18 to retrieve a list of meanings associated with the words of the key phrases. This section of STIBEL, therefore, does not disclose, or even suggest, the provision of an operator with at least one search characteristic of a query to request query broadening, as recited in amended claim 1. Since STIBEL does not suggest or disclose each and every feature of amended claim 1, STIBEL cannot anticipate claim 1. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Claims 2-7, 9, 16 and 17 depend from claim 1. These claims, therefore, patentably distinguish over STIBEL for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. These claims recite additional features not suggested or disclosed by STIBEL. For example, claim 9 recites "a delimiter provided with the operator to signal ordinary meaning with respect to the operator." The Office Action (pg. 5) cites to page 21, lines 1-5 of STIBEL as allegedly disclosing this feature. At page 21, lines 1-5, STIBEL discloses:

The flag submember 136 can include information representative of flag values that are to be added by the different actions and can be interpreted by the query processors for the different search engines 24, 28 and 30. Typically, flags are employed to provide information that indicates the reason as to why a term was added, for example, the type of action.

This section of STIBEL, thus, merely discloses the use of flags for indicating reasons why a given term was added to a query. The flags of STIBEL, therefore, indicate reasons why a given term was added to a query but have nothing to with signaling an ordinary meaning. This section of STIBEL, thus, does not disclose, or even suggest, “a delimiter provided with the operator *to signal ordinary meaning* with respect to the operator,” as recited in claim 9. For at least this additional reason, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of claim 9.

Independent claim 18 has been amended to substantially incorporate the features of dependent claim 27. Amended claim 18, therefore, recites a method that includes “accepting a query defining a search executable on potentially retrievable information and parsing the query, wherein the query comprises a plurality of search characteristics,” “logically grouping at least two of the search characteristics into a compound search characteristic,” “determining at least one broadening search characteristic that corresponds to the compound search characteristic,” “providing a broadened query that includes the at least one broadening search characteristic” and “presenting at least one of the broadened query or results of a search executed on the broadened query.” The Office Action relies on page 10, lines 13-16 of STIBEL for allegedly disclosing the features of claim 27 that have been substantially incorporated into claim 18. At page 10, lines 13-16, STIBEL discloses:

The query engine 14 may then employ the related words and the user query to create an expanded query that is understood to more accurately retrieve information from a search engine about the topic of interest to the user.

This section of STIBEL merely discloses the addition of related words to the search terms of a user query to create an expanded query that may more accurately retrieve information from a

search engine. This section of STIBEL does not disclose, or even suggest, the logical grouping of at least two search characteristics into a compound search characteristic and the determination of at least one broadening search characteristic that corresponds to the compound search characteristic, as recited in amended claim 18. This section of STIBEL, therefore, does not disclose or suggest “logically grouping at least two of the search characteristics into a compound search characteristic,” “determining at least one broadening search characteristic that corresponds to the compound search characteristic” and “providing a broadened query that includes the at least one broadening search characteristic,” as recited in amended claim 18. Withdrawal of the rejection of this claim is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Claims 19, 20, 22-24, 33 and 34 depend from claim 18. These claims, therefore, patentably distinguish over STIBEL for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 18.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103

On pages 6 and 9, the Office Action rejects pending claims 14 and 15 and 28-32 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being anticipated by STIBEL in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,098,081 (hereinafter “HEIDORN”). In rejecting claims 14 and 15, the Office Action asserts that HEIDORN discloses presenting “at least one search characteristic in the broadened query as at least one of a static list, a menu of selectable search characteristics, a set of checkboxes, and a list of selectable search characteristics...” Applicants submit, however, that the alleged disclosure of HEIDORN does not remedy the deficiencies in STIBEL noted above with respect

to claim 1, from which claims 14 and 15 depend. Applicants, therefore, request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 14 and 15 for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

In rejecting claims 28-32, the Office Action cites to various sections of HEIDORN as allegedly disclosing the features of these dependent claims. Applicants submit, however, that HEIDORN does not remedy the deficiencies in the disclosure of STIBEL noted above with respect to claim 18, from which claims 28-32 depend. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 28-32 is, therefore, respectfully requested for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 18.

New claims 37 and 38 recite a method that includes “receiving a search query comprising a plurality of search terms from a user, wherein the search query includes a user selected operator associated with a first one of the search terms of the search query,” “broadening the first one of the search terms based on the user-selected operator to produce a broadened search query” and “executing a search using the broadened search query.” Applicants submit that STIBEL or HEIDORN, either singly or in any reasonable combination, do not disclose or suggest this combination of features. New claims 37 and 38, therefore, patentably distinguish over the cited references.

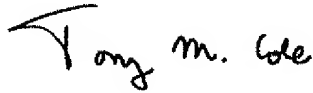
New claim 39 recites a method that includes “receiving a search query comprising a plurality of search terms,” “broadening one of the plurality of search terms,” “excluding the broadened one of the plurality of search terms from the search query,” “executing a search based on the search query to provide search results” and “evaluating the search results relative to the excluded search term using categorical or clustered distinctions.” Applicants submit that STIBEL or HEIDORN, either singly or in any reasonable combination, do not disclose or

suggest this combination of features. New claim 39, therefore, patentably distinguishes over the cited references.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration of this application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims. To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1070 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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